
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health

Woodlands' survivors finally receive compensation

VANCOUVER – Former residents of Woodlands who attended the school have started to receive compensation for systemic abuse suffered at the provincial institution.

“This year, the B.C. government moved to finally do the right thing to extend compensation to Woodlands’ survivors previously denied redress for the abuse they suffered at this provincial institution,” said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. “We hope that by extending compensation to people who had been formally excluded from payment and topping up the payments that people received under the previous class-action lawsuit, they are able to find the sense of closure and justice they fought for nearly 20 years.”

People who resided at Woodlands prior to 1974 will receive \$10,000 in an ex-gratia payment. In addition, people who resided in Woodlands after 1974 will receive up to a maximum of \$10,000. The payment will take into account settlement awards previously provided through the Woodlands class action settlement. It is expected that monies will be paid out by March 31, 2019.

Among those receiving redress is Bill McArthur, former Woodlands resident and survivors' advocate. Previously denied any compensation because of the Aug. 1, 1974 cut off, McArthur received his \$10,000 ex-gratia payment from the Minister of Health today, on behalf of the Province.

“Today I feel some sense of closure on a difficult past as I, and many Woodlands’ survivors, are finally achieving something we have long fought for,” said McArthur. “Furthermore, I encourage other survivors to reach out to the provincial government to receive their redress as well. This vindication, I hope, will allow them to live the rest of their lives with a sense of self respect and dignity.”

As of the end of September 2018, the Province has contacted 314 former residents of Woodlands. The Province is asking former residents or their guardians and caregivers who have not been contacted to call toll free 1 888 523-7192 or email:

woodlands.care.facility.residents@gov.bc.ca

They are asked to provide the following information:

- full name
- date of birth
- address and
- the name and address of their legal guardian, if they have one

Woodlands institution opened in New Westminster on May 17, 1878, as the Provincial Asylum

for the Insane, later renamed the Provincial Hospital for the Insane. In 1950 it was renamed Woodlands School and in 1974 the name was, once again, changed to Woodlands. It provided care primarily to the developmentally disabled and some individuals with both developmental disabilities and mental illness. It was operated by the Ministry of Health until June 27, 1974, on a medical model. After that time, Woodlands was managed and operated by the Ministry of Human Resources.

In 2000, former provincial ombudsperson Dulcie McCallum was commissioned by the provincial government to conduct an independent review to determine if abuse had taken place at Woodlands. Her report, released in 2002, found that there had been widespread sexual, physical and psychological abuse of Woodlands' residents.

Following the release of McCallum's report, the public guardian and trustee (PGT) commenced an investigation on Woodlands, which began in 2002 and was released August 2004, entitled The Woodlands Project. The PGT report, which reviewed approximately 100,000 pages of residents' files, supported the findings made by McCallum. However, the provincial government at the time did not accept the findings of either report.

In August 2002, former Woodlands residents commenced a class action. The class action was originally certified to include all former residents. However, the Province sought and won a ruling at the B.C. Court of Appeal to exclude people who lived at Woodlands prior to Aug. 1, 1974. The settlement agreement was reached in 2009 and approved in 2010, and a compensation claims process was established.

The payments are being made on an ex-gratia basis, without admission of liability on the part of the Province.

Quotes:

Jane Dyson, former executive director, Disability Alliance BC –

“Finally, after all these years of being told no, our Province is saying yes to the survivors of Woodlands. I am thrilled that this day has finally come, and that the remaining survivors will receive recognition of the abuse they suffered. It’s very important now that the disability community and the Province share the information widely about how former Woodlands' residents can access their payment. We need to ensure that as many survivors as possible know that their pain and struggle has been acknowledged and their voices listened to.”

David Klein, Klein Lawyers, acting on behalf of Woodlands' survivors in the class action lawsuit –

“We’re delighted to see that the Woodlands payments are now rolling out. This government deserves credit for having the courage and compassion to acknowledge the needless harms caused to the Woodlands’ survivors, who are some of society’s most vulnerable individuals. Thank you from all of those who have worked on this case over the past decade.”

Learn More:

For information on the March 2018 announcement, visit:
<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018PREM0013-000547>

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